

By: Perry

S.B. No. 2124

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a pilot program for assisting certain recipients of public benefits with gaining self-sufficiency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 531.02241 to read as follows:

Sec. 531.02241. PILOT PROGRAM FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF CERTAIN PERSONS RECEIVING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES BENEFITS OR OTHER SERVICES. (a) The commission shall develop and implement a pilot program for assisting an eligible participant under this section with gaining self-sufficiency and no longer requiring financial assistance, child care assistance, or other public benefits.

(b) A person is eligible to participate in the pilot program established under this section if the person:

(1) is a recipient of financial assistance benefits under Chapter 31, Human Resources Code, or child care assistance under the child care management services program operated by the Texas Workforce Commission;

(2) has a total household income that is less than the amount necessary for the recipient to be self-sufficient based on the recipient's family's makeup and geographical area of residence;

(3) is at least 18 but not more than 55 years of age;

and

1 (4) is willing and able to be employed.

2 (c) The program must be designed to assist eligible
3 participants in attaining self-sufficiency by:

4 (1) identifying eligibility requirements for the
5 benefits or assistance described by Subsection (b)(1) that may be
6 waived for a limited period of time and that, if applied, would
7 impede self-sufficiency;

8 (2) implementing strategies, including waiving the
9 eligibility requirements identified in Subdivision (1), to remove
10 barriers to self-sufficiency; and

11 (3) moving eligible participants through progressive
12 stages toward self-sufficiency that include the following phases:

13 (A) an initial phase in which a participant moves
14 out of financial crisis by securing housing, medical care, and
15 financial assistance;

16 (B) a second phase in which the participant moves
17 toward stability by securing employment and child care and
18 participating in case management and financial education programs;

19 (C) a third phase in which the participant
20 transitions to self-sufficiency by securing employment that pays a
21 living wage, paying debt, and building savings; and

22 (D) a final phase in which the participant moves
23 out of poverty by amassing at least three months of savings and
24 eliminating debt so that the participant will no longer be
25 dependent on public assistance benefits.

26 (d) The pilot program established under this section must
27 operate for at least 12 months but may include additional planning,

1 testing, and data-gathering periods.

2 (e) The commission shall develop and implement the pilot
3 program established under this section with the assistance of the
4 Texas Workforce Commission, local workforce development boards,
5 the United States Department of Health and Human Services,
6 faith-based and other relevant public or private organizations, and
7 any other entity or person the commission determines appropriate.

8 (f) On the conclusion of the pilot program but not later
9 than September 1, 2020, the commission shall report to the
10 legislature on the results of the pilot program. The report must
11 include:

12 (1) an evaluation of the program's effect on eligible
13 participants in achieving self-sufficiency and no longer requiring
14 financial assistance, child care assistance, or other public
15 benefits;

16 (2) the impact to this state on the costs of the
17 financial assistance program under Chapter 31, Human Resources
18 Code, and the child care management services program operated by
19 the Texas Workforce Commission; and

20 (3) recommendations on the feasibility and
21 continuation of the pilot program.

22 (g) The executive commissioner and the Texas Workforce
23 Commission may adopt rules to implement this section.

24 (h) This section expires September 1, 2020.

25 SECTION 2. If before implementing any provision of this Act
26 a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a
27 federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision,

1 the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or
2 authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the
3 waiver or authorization is granted.

4 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
5 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
6 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
7 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
8 Act takes effect September 1, 2017.